

Stations for Creation

The Stations of the Cross offer us more than a devotional practice – they are a way of entering the journey of Christ through the Passion, not as a distant event but something embodied, something alive within and around us. It is a way of remembering the Cross as more than a mere simple sentimental symbol for personal salvation, but as the culmination of Incarnation itself – a bond of sacrificial love that unites all beings, embracing their complexity and difference without erasing it. The way to the Cross is a journey of eclipsing fulfillment and love that secures us in this bond, but it is also a path of suffering and lamentation. The Stations are a way of journeying within ourselves and tracking our many movements away from the promise of the Cross: the movements of fear that lead us to grasp false power and material advantage that comes at the expense of the wellbeing of not just other persons but all of creation. It is an opportunity to seek again our identity as lovers of all things in the image of God's love. Hopefully, the journey through these Stations will take us back into the knowledge of our covenant with the entire family of God's creation. While you are praying, set aside the priorities of the self and the stories it pushes: allow every tree, rock, weed, bee, gust of wind, patch of clay, or curious bird to teach us their own story of covenant. Each story offers a reflection and a prayer for the rediscovery of health in our relationships with our kin.

Additionally, you are invited to engage with guided visualization practices for each Station. As much or as little as you feel called, allow these practices to carry you into the Passion narratives, immersing your mind and body in the journey of Christ to his execution. To imagine these scenes as if they were happening now, as if we were there, is to step into a lineage of prayer shared by Christians for millennia.

May God give us hope for healing. May we look with reverence on the time we spend in this prayer as a sacred altar on which the bonds of creation may be reimagined and our relationships rediscovered.

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The First Station **Jesus Before Pilate: The Dehumanization of Power**

Opening Prayer

We adore You, Christ, and we praise You.
Because, by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

The earth is mourning, withering, the world is pining, withering, the heavens are pining away with the earth. The earth is defiled under its inhabitants' feet, for they have transgressed the law, violated the precept, broken the everlasting covenant. So, a curse consumes the earth and its inhabitants suffer the penalty.

— Isaiah 24: 4-6

Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate. "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate. "You have said so," Jesus replied.

— Mark 15: 1-2

Reflection

In Pilate's presentation of Christ, we are confronted by a callous dismissal and casual mockery of life's value that is depressingly familiar. Pilate's almost bored performance in front of the crowd mirrors the professionally scripted reports of White House correspondents: justifications for death and dominion, wrapped in the complacency of place of business-like expediency. This is the mocking contentment at the heart of imperial power – there is no time nor room to allow oneself to *feel* for the earth or for people or for any weaker beings. This callous dismissal of the vulnerable struggle for love is one that we are probably all so familiar with as a voice within ourselves – a voice that comes up when we are overwhelmed by the ills of the world and feel helpless to aid or connect with our neighbors. This is a world where we can be trained to feel hopeless, to allow our empathy to be eroded, and then be consumed by guilt for it.

But imperial complacency is not final: the body of Christ is treasured. The body of the suffering lover is treasured and redeemed – always. We are met in this story, and we may be met again and again in the stories of our life or the world, with one who wields power and yet has more concern for that power and the expediency of force than they have for a suffering body. But Jesus shows us his answer: Jesus shows us the shape of his faith. In the face of Pilate's spiritual thinness, Jesus hangs close to the curve of the world, close to the earth, close to those who hold him. The seal over the earth is insubstantial to the seed, the seed that will rise, the seed that in frailty clings to the soil.

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Jesus the Condemned does not exist only in this story. Jesus is present to us in millions – even billions – of suffering bodies. Christ the Redeemer is present to us in every soul condemned to life (and even death) in a cage, every soul made to feel damned by this world, every soul who the powers-that-be deem is not worthy to live. He is present to us in everyone that the powers of Empire have decided to be “enemy”, “rebel”, “outsider”, “danger to society”. Christ is around us in every one of our neighbors we have put away, condemned to a painful divorce from communal life.

Pilate in his power resents the Christ. Why? Because Jesus is Other, because his difference is danger and perversion, his meekness a threat to economic totalization. Christ is the one who brings us words we do not want to hear, the one who reminds us of crimes we would prefer to forget, the one whose humility manages to upset the orderliness of our lives. He is the divine force that tears away the veil we place upon our impurities, the power that breaks down the walls we build to enforce separation in the name of safety. He comes with a trembling voice, speaking, “We are children of the same God; we are destined to abide in the same home; we are fated to eat at the same table.” This Christ will not let us forget the meaning of communion, nor its radicality.

As soon as Pilate understands the true meaning of this voice, Pilate decides – “this rebel must be silenced. This voice will destroy our family life, it will disrupt our social order, it will sabotage our ways of doing business.” The Gospel is a message of chaos to the administrators of Empire.

Jesus stands before these accusations and is silent. Finally, Pilate confronts him with a question, “What have you done?”. Christ responds: “I came into the world for this, to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice” (John 18:35-38). The truth to which the life of Christ is witness is not a collection of facts or theses, nor an ideological system, nor an intellectual understanding of reality. It is, as Henri Nouwen says, the “life-giving intimacy between himself and the Father of which he wants us to partake.” Pilate could not listen to that voice. The full promise of the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection, however, is this: anyone who enters into the life of the Spirit can receive the Spirit of truth. The Spirit of truth brings freedom from the obsessions and compulsions of all worldly systems and all spirits. The Spirit renews us in our belonging to the inner life of the Divine, and brings us to the life of the world with open hearts and attentive minds. As we seek Jesus, we are opened to the voice of the Spirit, and can journey farther than our bodies alone would allow. There is a freedom that this belonging to the Spirit brings that cannot be taken away by the powers of darkness. Though our bodies and minds may seem to belong to the prisons of this world, in Christ this is not true. Jesus, despite his death at the hands of imperial power, was the freest human being who ever lived. Pilate stood before this freedom and condemned it. Pilate sought to turn Jesus into one of the damned. But police and military power does not have the might to transform salvation into damnation. Jesus’ death, in witness to the truth, became not the execution of total state power, but the opening of the way to full truth and full freedom.

Christ exemplifies for us the strange condition of devotion to the Spirit: the more that one belongs to God, the more one will be condemned. But the condemnation of the world cannot be

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separated from the revelation of the truth. It is precisely where we are diminished in the eyes of the powers that be that we may discover that we have a place in a neverending community of Gospel resistance.

All people naturally hunger for the truth – we all ache for that communion of Love that Jesus exemplified. But the closer we get to the satisfaction of that hunger, the deeper we open ourselves up to condemnation, and the weight of the Cross. This is the story of every apostolic or prophetic figure in human history: the story of Peter and John, Paul and Barnabas, Martin Luther King Jr. and Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day and Nelson Mandela, and of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Their joy and their sorrow became one because they chose the life of the truth in the midst of the life of the world. Those who would bear witness to love in the midst of worldly furor see something that Pilate and his spiritual descendants cannot see: the face of a suffering God who calls us far beyond fear into the truth of a love that lasts.

Practice

Quieten yourself now. Follow your breath, in and out, as an anchor to your awareness. The breath is the bridge of the spirit, between body and mind. Take a few breaths, opening your mind and connecting with your body. Imagine the scene. The crowd... Pilate... The guards... The authorities... Christ and Barabbas... Take time to imagine the whole setting as vividly as possible, to *compose yourself, seeing the place*... What kind of a place is it? Clean or dirty? Large or small? Notice the architecture... Notice the weather...

Having prepared the stage, let the whole scene come to life now: see the people to whom Jesus is being presented... How many people are there?... What sort of people?... How are they dressed?... What are they doing?... What are they saying?... What does it feel like to be among them?...

Notice Pilate. How is he standing?... What is he wearing?... How does he look at the crowd?... How does he look at Jesus?... What are your feelings looking at him?...

Now let your gaze move to Jesus. Watch all his actions and movements... Where does he look?... What does his face say?... What do you think he is feeling?... The moment is arriving... Pilate speaks to the people... What is the exchange?... What is the atmosphere?... Fill in the account of the gospel...

Dwell especially on the actions and words of Jesus... Listen to him... Feel the contrast of his presence with that of the crowd or of Pilate...

Jesus turns to you... You meet, eye to eye... What is in his eyes... What do you feel... See the world today, in the eyes of Christ... See your life in this world in his eyes... Where does this scene show up?... Where is Christ made vulnerable before power?... Where is love ignored for gain or comfort?... What does Christ do in these places in our world today?... What does Christ want you to do?... Are you really ready to take all the consequences of being a disciple?... You have arrived at a moment of faithful lament... What does it mean to love the world as he did?... Do you have the trust to follow where his love will take you?... Then watch as Christ is defeated

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and made low... Watch as he is subjected to cruelty and does not respond... What does it mean to respond to this scene today?

Spend a while now in quiet prayer in the weakness of Christ...

Prayer

God, Giver of all Life, make us to remember the glory of weakness. Show us again how to hear the voice of the soil, the needs of the lowly. Give us the strength to risk transformation – make us new to our very core. Free us from the myopia of power. The Earth is Yours and all that is in it – pour out upon us the power of Your love, that we may celebrate and its beauty. Praise be to You!

Second Station

Jesus Takes Up the Cross: A Tree to Be Planted For the Future

We adore You, Christ, and we praise You.
Because, by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

They handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written: *The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for she has anointed me. She has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to to proclaim the Lord's year of favor.*

— Luke 4: 17-19

Pilate brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement. "Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but caesar," the chief priests answered. Finally, Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull.

— John 19: 13, 14b, 15-17

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Reflection

The Cross, at its most immediate, is a tool of Empire, a technology of violence designed to break bodies and humiliate dissenters. It stood in its time as a monument to the systemic logic of Roman expansionism – a logic alive today in every ideology or social force that would mark some bodies as expendable, some as resources, and others as threats. But the Cross does not stay what Empire intends it to be: it stands not only as the bearer of the sins of this world, but also as the rising tree of the world yet to come. It becomes a wild site of resistance, the axis of a world reborn, a world healed, a world where our yearnings move to God and God's yearnings move to us without faltering. The Cross, transformed by Jesus, is the tree of life. And it is not planted in an inaccessible Edenic calm, but right in the wounded soil of history. There it becomes a living presence, an interface where the machinery of death meets the unrelenting, creative force of life. If we see it with the eyes of faith, we see how in this moment of the Passion, as it is lifted by Jesus, the Cross stretches outward and upward until its arms embrace the broken and the lost of the human world and its roots reach deep into the very heart of the suffering earth.

The two millennia of Christian faith-practice that we have inherited teach us that the Cross is not only an object of contemplation and a resource for theological elaboration, but a demanding path of transformation. It is not only a symbol of piety but a sign of the deep, untraceable entanglement between Creator and creation. Our faith assures us that this is a bond that the powers of greed and dominion cannot sever, no matter how sharp their blades or how perfectly refined their machines. The Cross becomes the tree of life not because it erases suffering, but precisely because it roots itself in the very ground of suffering. To take up the Cross is to plant this tree within ourselves – so that its roots may intertwine with our being, and its branches may reach outwards to spread through our lives.

When Jesus takes up the Cross, it is not with defeated resignation, but with the radical love that alone can overturn the structures of dominion. It is in this act that he takes upon himself not just our private impurities, but the weight of every system of dehumanization and every power that grows by exploiting life. And it is in the embrace of the Cross alone that we can refuse Empire's logic. With Jesus we can choose connection over control, vulnerability over dominion, and kinship over compliance. The Cross that we wear on our necks and hold in our hearts and hang in our homes was transformed in the hands of the Savior so that it is no longer a tool of Empire; it has become the staff of the Shepherd who leads his people without fear through the valley of death. This Cross calls us to a deeply material, profoundly situated spirituality. It calls us to see the prisons, the pipelines, the social and environmental deserts formed by extraction and waste. It calls us to abandon ourselves in order to stand with those whom Empire has discarded, to grieve with them and struggle with them and build new bonds of solidarity that cannot be predicted or controlled. This Cross, if we are to be true to it, will be for us a banner of loving justice, the fulcrum of the Cosmos where time and space bend and love becomes greater than domination.

The Cross stands as the most radical gesture in human history: the eternal Creator claiming kinship with all who are oppressed, exploited, and excluded. It is the point where time is

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consummated with the One Who enters it to make it new. Embrace the Cross as a tree to be planted in a primordial garden, facing the empty tomb and rising to its light. We will plant it with our own hands.

Practice

Quieten yourself now. Follow your breath, in and out, as an anchor to your awareness. The breath is the bridge of the spirit, between body and mind. Take a few breaths, opening your mind and connecting with your body. Imagine the scene. The crowd... Jesus... The Romans... The Jewish authorities... The street and the Cross... Take time to imagine the whole setting as vividly as possible, to *compose yourself, seeing the place*... What kind of a place is it? Clean or dirty? Large or small? How does the street feel under your feet? How does the air or sun feel on your skin? How does the air smell? Notice the architecture... Notice the weather...

Having prepared the stage, let the whole scene come to life now: see the movement of the crowd around Christ... How many people are there?... What sort of people?... What do they want?... Are they enjoying this?... What are they saying?... What does it feel like to be among them?...

Notice the Cross... How does it look?... What is it made of?... What does this image make you feel?...

Now let your gaze move to Jesus. Watch all his actions and movements... How does he move?... How do you feel seeing him in pain?... What does his face say?... What do you think he is thinking?...

The moment is arriving... Christ bends to receive the Cross... What is the atmosphere?... Fill in the account of the gospel with your vision...

Dwell especially on the feelings and actions of Jesus... Imagine his reality as one among many executed by the state in Jerusalem and across the world...

Does Jesus turn to you... Do you meet, eye to eye?... What is in his eyes?... What do you feel?... Can you see the world today, as Christ is burdened with his Cross?... Can you see your weight on this Cross?... What does it mean for Jesus to bear it?...

Spend a while now in quiet prayer in the weakness of Christ...

Prayer

God of all Creation, change our hearts to make space for You. Give us eyes to see glimpses of You in all things, even where there is suffering and destruction. Be generous with Your creative Spirit. The Earth is Yours and all that is in it – pour out upon us the power of Your love, that we may celebrate and its beauty. Praise be to You!

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Third Station **Jesus Falls For the First Time**

We adore You, Christ, and we praise You.
Because, by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

I brought you to a fertile country to enjoy its produce and good things; but no sooner had you entered than you defiled my land, and made my heritage detestable.
— Jeremiah 2:7

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.
— Isaiah 53: 4-5

Reflection

Christ did not fall alone. His fall was one among many in the relentless grinding of the machinery of imperial control – a system that feeds on the collapse of vulnerable bodies, the desecration of lands, and the silencing of anything that resists. As his knees struck the earth and the weight of the Cross drove him downward, his fall was echoed in every corner of creation. Christ fell, but so too did the condemned who walked beside him, also to be slain that day. He is falling still, with prisoners buried in cells, with lands razed and drained for profits, with seas and rivers poisoned by greed. Not one victim on this earth falls alone. When one single body collapses under the weight of oppression, the Creator himself shudders. The whole sedimented archive of imperial violence throughout time is active in the weak and falling Christ, the weight of history pressed into his faltering body.

The Christian sees in this fall of Christ not merely a collapse into humiliation and defeat but a continuation of his descent into the vulnerability of carnate life itself. This makes this a fall not into absence but into presence – presence unbearable, saturated, eruptive. It is the radical exposure of the Godhead to embodied life, to the grasp of predatory systems on flesh, and to existence within a calculative machine that seeks to convert living bodies into resources for extraction and control. With his fall, we can imagine Christ extending his Incarnation, inscribing his body into all the landscapes, species, ecosystems, and economies where violence is distributed and domination networked. To fall beneath the Cross is to be folded into the logic of the Cross itself, a logic that Empire thought it could master but that persistently escapes its grasp.

This fall, paradoxically, becomes an exaltation of vulnerability. It is an utterly human trembling that interrupts the totalizing order of the system. As Empire's machinery demands efficiency, categorization, and finality, the fall of Christ interrupts this demand. His descent beneath the

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Cross is not a resignation to power but an inversion of it. In the faltering of his flesh, Christ opens a space where the machinery of control stutters – where it encounters the friction of human frailty, unspeakable and unmanageable, incalculable and divine.

Prayerful attention invites us to linger in the paradox: Christ does not fall away from creation but into it. The Cross bears down, his body gives out, and yet something holds – a tenderness, a trace of connection that the world cannot obliterate. And in every merely human fall that echoes this weary stumble of Jesus – in every body crushed by oppression, every land scarred by industry, every relationship severed by greed or fear – there remains the possibility of this unexpected, uncontainable rupture, this moment that refuses to be subsumed. Our sufferings become sites of solidarity, not as a universalization of victimhood but as an acknowledgment of shared vulnerability and entangled salvation, of a kingdom that demands we be otherwise than we are now.

We might ask, then: what does it truly mean for us to fall with Christ? To carry the weight of the Cross, to let our bodies sink to a wounded earth, to feel the fractures in our world and in ourselves? To fall is not simply to despair or to fail; it is to enter into the instability of existence, to open ourselves to the traces of love and loss that haunt the air, the soil, and the water. It is to release our hold on certainty and enter the tenuous, tangled work of communion.

May we, like Christ, fall into this work – not in resignation but resistance, not in collapse but in connection. May we touch what is fractured in the earth and in ourselves and discover, within its weakness, the promise of a world remade.

Practice

Quieten yourself now. Follow your breath, in and out, as an anchor to your awareness. The breath is the bridge of the spirit, between body and mind. Take a few breaths, opening your mind and connecting with your body. Imagine the scene.

Imagine Christ surrounded by the crowd... Imagine his body buckling under the strain... Imagine him falling, collapsing to the ground... Does he fall slowly?... Is it sudden?... Does he make a noise?... What does the crowd do?...

Watch the fallen Jesus. What are his actions and movements... Does he try to rise?... Does he look defeated?... Does the crowd enjoy this?... How do the guards treat him?... Fill in the account of the gospel with your vision...

Do you see Christ, fallen in your world today?... Does Christ fall with you?... Does he fall for you?... Does he fall in the vacancy of rotting cities?... Does he fall in the desecration of stripped mountainsides?... Does he fall in the absurdity of violence?... Does he fall with cleared forests?... Has he fall in moments in your life?... Can we join him, or is he joining us?... Can we mourn with him, as he mourns with us?...

Spend a while now in quiet prayer in the weakness of Christ...

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Prayer

O God Who has mercy for every living being, remember to us our connection to them all. Shepherd us into right relationship with all our siblings, all-too-human and a-human and more-than-human. The Earth is Yours and all that is in it – pour out upon us the power of Your love, that we may celebrate life and its beauty. Praise be to You!

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Fourth Station **Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother**

We adore You, Christ, and we praise You.
Because, by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

Like a child comforted by its mother I will comfort you.
— Isaiah 66:13

Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the rising and falling of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own heart too.”
— Luke 24:34-35

Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look around and see. Is any suffering like my suffering?
— Lamentations 1:12

Reflection

On the way to his death, Jesus meets his mother. The Son of God, who entered without remainder into the fragility of human existence only through the radical “yes” of Mary, now stands before her, torn and bleeding and doomed by the power of an occupational authority. The Living God poured into finite flesh has been dragged down by the agents of imperial power. The one whom Mary cradled, nursed, and raised in love and in the hope of her ancestors is now reduced to a figure of humiliation, a victim of pointless and routine brutality; the Creator reduced to bloodied matter.

The road is crowded. The air is full of mocking cries and the clamor of an entertained crowd. Mary does not reach out to take his suffering from her son; she cannot. But she does not shy away. She is there, fully present, seeing all that he endures. And Jesus, beaten and bent beneath the instrument of his own execution, looks back at her. At the heart of suffering is the gaze that meets the suffering of the other with love.

Mary’s grief at this moment is personal, yes – but it becomes something more than her own. This act of witness from Mary is the starting point for much of Christian discipleship: a refusal to avert one’s gaze or to resign oneself to despair. The Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff reminds us that conversion is the genesis of liberation, beginning in the heart, as soon as we refuse to see suffering as inevitable or justifiable. Mary, though she exists completely without power in this moment, is turning her heart towards love, and in maintaining her presence she refuses to let Empire define the terms of human dignity. Following the path of Mary, our grief becomes a prophetic act of solidarity against the people and systems that seek to fragment and exploit. Like her, our acknowledgment of suffering can become an entrance into it, by which we share in

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the burden of the world's pain so we may also share in its healing. As members of Christ's body extended through time and space, we can expand the "yes" Mary gave at the Annunciation, and engage through prayer and practice in the same active trust in the redemptive power of God that Mary exemplified.

Practice

Quieten yourself now. Follow your breath, in and out, as an anchor to your awareness. The breath is the bridge of the spirit, between body and mind. Take a few breaths, opening your mind and connecting with your body. Imagine the scene.

Imagine Mary pushing through the crowd... How does she look?... What is she wearing?... How does she move?... Does she call out?... Is she silent?... How do the people treat her?... Do they notice her?... Does anyone take stock of her grief?... Imagine her coming forward in the path Jesus, her son, takes to the spot of his execution... What is on her face?...

Do they embrace?... Do they exchange words?... How long do they have?... What do they say and do?...

What is the cry of Mary today?... Who are the afflicted mothers, the ones who see the loss of love in this world?... How does Christ meet them?... What would it mean to hear their cries?... Could we lift their voices?... What does the Mother of God wish for in our world?... What would it be to join in her witness to the death of her son?...

Spend a while now in quiet prayer in the suffering of Christ and the world...

Prayer

God of Truth, bring us closer to the suffering of the world. Bring us closer to the suffering of Mary, Mother of God. Those who care for Jesus care for the wounded planet. There is care abounding for the places laid waste by human power. Let us share in this care, let us awaken to it and be moved by it. The Earth is Yours and all that is in it – pour out upon us the power of Your love, that we may celebrate life and its beauty. Praise be to You!